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THE  
SPEECH  
OF  
*RANDLE JACKSON, ESQ.*  
ADDRESSED TO  
THE HONORABLE THE COMMITTEE  
OF THE  
*HOUSE OF COMMONS,*  
Appointed to consider of the  
STATE  
OF THE  
WOOLLEN MANUFACTURE  
OF  
*ENGLAND,*  
ON BEHALF OF  
THE CLOTH-WORKERS AND SHEERMEN  
OF THE COUNTIES OF  
*Yorkshire, Lancashire, Wiltshire, Somersetshire, and*  
*Gloucestershire.*

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PUBLISHED BY THEM FROM THE SHORT-HAND COPY OF  
MR. GURNEY.

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London:

*Printed by C. Storer, Paternoster Row,*  
AND SOLD BY J. STOCKDALE, PICCADILLY.

1806.

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OF

HAROLD JACKSON, ESQ.

ADDRESSED TO

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

ON THE

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AND

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IN

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AND

THE CLOTH WORKERS AND SHEPHERDS

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THE  
SPEECH,

&c.

MR. CHAIRMAN,

SIR,

THE period has at length arrived when it is become my duty to review the case of those petitioner's whom I have the honor to represent, and to offer to the committee such observations upon the evidence as may best elucidate their claim to its just consideration.

In discharging a duty of such extent and importance, I feel extremely anxious to abridge my address as much as I can, consistently with the interest of my clients, and to avoid as far as

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I have strength of mind or memory, troubling the committee with a single superfluous observation.

I know not how better to treat this case than by supposing that the parties before you on the one hand are the masters, and on the other the men; and that those to whom I have the honor of addressing myself, are seated as judges between them. It is indeed necessary that I should have the liberty so to consider the parties.

It will occur to you that such would be the course of proceeding in ordinary cases before Parliament, as where a bill is to be supported or opposed. The present is a committee of inquiry appointed to collect information; and the nature and necessity of the case has imposed upon them the task of interposing such interrogatories as under other circumstances would have been done by counsel; unless, therefore, I have the liberty of considering you as judges, I should be deprived of that freedom of speech so absolutely necessary for me to enjoy in conducting the case before you.

I trust, Sir, you will do me the justice to be-



lieve, that I am not less anxious to discharge my duty upon this occasion in a manner acceptable to yourselves, and that nothing would give me more concern than to be thought for a moment to trespass those bounds of deep respect which I entertain for the committee. Should I in the course and earnestness of observation be so unfortunate as to raise such a suspicion, I entreat you before-hand to be assured that it will be unfounded, and totally repugnant to the feelings of my mind.

Sir, when I stated the committee to be seated as judges in this cause, I did it under the impression and conviction that you will feel yourselves called upon in that character to appreciate the evidence before you by those rules which courts impose upon themselves; for, however you may have varied from them in the form of your interrogatories, or in your mode of obtaining information; yet as judges between the parties, you will not feel yourselves at liberty to depart from that principle of immutable justice upon which the law of evidence, its construction, and application, is unvariably founded.

Meaning then to observe upon the evidence before you, as if it were put in before a court,

permit me to notice some of the rules to which I have alluded.

One of the rules for the interpretation of evidence is, that when witnesses are not disparaged by their character or by their conduct, they are entitled to equal credit without regard to their stations in life. Another is, that when witnesses give contradictory testimony without standing impeached by either their character, conduct, or situation, numbers are allowed to prevail.

These are the principal rules as to personal credit, and I have no hesitation in saying, the committee would depart from its duty, were it to concede or to withhold belief by any other rules than those by which the same man would or would not receive credit in a court of justice.

Sir, you will also be enabled to get at truth by another rule, to which courts are never inattentive; that is, where it happens that either party, in the endeavour to establish particular points, betray themselves into certain admissions, in such cases, judges and juries ever fasten upon unintentional admissions with more earnestness than upon any main proposition that falls from

the mouth of the witness, and give them greater weight from its being evident that they cannot be premeditated.

With these preliminary observations as to the nature and the mode of construing evidence, I shall take the liberty, before I state the different heads of the case, to dispose of one subject which has arisen out of it; it is one that has become of no inconsiderable importance, from the way in which it has been treated, though I trust that ultimately it will not be mixed with the cause of the petitioners; but if it be reported to the House of Commons, will be offered as a distinct consideration—I mean the Institutions. I beg leave to state, that whether such Institutions consist of masters or of men, they are not in themselves illegal. It is before you in the evidence of 1803, and in the evidence of the present session, that both masters and men have had their meetings, have assumed the same delegated form, if that signified any thing, and have associated together for the purpose of promoting their interests in their respective departments of the trade. I again beg permission to say, that while *Magna Charta*, and the Bill of Rights, shall remain, Institutions of that sort will

remain unimpeachable. Englishmen have an undoubted right to confederate to maintain themselves against proceedings unjustly commenced, to prosecute others who may offend against their legal privileges, to support themselves before the legislature of the country, or to oppose those who seek enactments which they may think threaten their prosperity. I repeat, that Institutions for such purposes are most legal. It would be ridiculous and absurd to talk to the subject about his right to petition—to tell him of the consideration of parliament, and that the ears and hearts of its members are always open to the petitions of the people, if they were not allowed to confederate, and to apply their money and their talents in the exercise of that right, for the purposes of bringing their case fairly before parliament, and maintaining it when so brought.

We find throughout the evidence in 1803, that almost every master that was called, for I put the question to every one of them, was a member of the committee of masters; one of them was the chairman of their Institution: they all admitted that they subscribed for the purpose of carrying on parliamentary proceedings on one side, as did the men on the other; and



both of these institutions I maintain were strictly legal.

I have, however, explained to my clients in private, and I wish them now to hear from me in public, that though they have a right to associate for such purposes as I have mentioned, they have no right to apply any part of their funds to the support of men who may have agreed to strike work. Neither have the masters a right to do what they have done; namely, confederate together with a view of lowering the wages of the men, or of agreeing with each other not to employ any man concerned in this defence before parliament. Both masters and men were wrong when they carried their Institutions to this length. It might, indeed, become a question if the machine which they are said to have combined not to work after be *an unlawful machine*. But I will not for obvious reasons touch upon such distinctions; I would rather they did understand, and I believe they do understand, that combinations not to work, or to sustain others in such a resolution, are generally illegal. I think I can hold myself personally responsible for every guinea and half-crown that shall in future be given to men to encourage them to forbear from work; I think I can pledge myself to the committee, that it is



the last offence of this description that they will hear of from that order of persons whom I at present represent. Their error in this respect has been casual and inadvertent; they have misconceived the law, they know better now, and I think I can venture to say that the mistake will not be repeated. But I need not say to gentlemen like you, experienced in the world, and habituated to the thoughts, feelings, and I had almost said the prejudices of parliament, that if the subject of the institutions, described as I have heard them in terms of terror and offence, should be mixed with the rest of the case; and if the house should not be enabled to get at the state of the woollen manufacture, and the important facts which concern the gig mill, the apprentice's law, the searchers and sealers, &c. without perpetually stumbling upon it, it must have a tendency to make an impression of the most unfavourable and unwarrantable nature in the minds of those whose duty it is to be strictly impartial. I therefore make it a claim of justice, as well as of policy, and of wisdom, that in whatever report you make to the house, that subject shall stand by itself, and not be mixed with other matter, so as to affect the evidence necessary to inform the houses of parliament as to the true nature and state of the manufacture of woollen cloth.

I should disguise my feelings if I did not say I entertain no great apprehensions of any law taking place upon the subject alluded to severer than that which at present exists; if there should be a revision of that law, I think it would produce one infinitely more mild than the Act of the 39. and 40. Geo. 3. I am not here denying the necessity of that act, but it is impossible for any man who knows and loves the constitution of his country, not deeply to deplore its necessity, if necessary it was. I have no fear, I say, of a law stronger than that being brought into parliament, because no stronger one can be passed unless it deals in blood; it will then produce the consequence which all severe laws do, namely, non-enforcement. I trust, therefore, that the subject of Institutions will be kept entirely distinct from those branches of the case which I enumerated in my opening address, and to which I shall now proceed to speak.

The points in question are, the gig-mill, the sheering-frame, the searchers and sealers, and the apprentice' law.

With respect to the gig-mill, much has been said as to machinery in general, and much evidence has been gone into, indeed, to state the extreme

impropriety of checking machinery. I shall, therefore, beg leave to say a very few words respecting machinery in general, as applicable to those particular machines, to the toleration of which we object, and which are already prohibited by law. I cannot be insensible that there is no one subject which our countrymen have taken up with more unqualified enthusiasm than the application of machinery to manufacture. If there be one upon which more than another their ingenuous tempers have run wild, and respecting which they have been more in error, it is that of the indiscriminate application of machinery. They will not deliberate upon those due distinctions which the best writers have made between the use and the abuse of machinery. I shall prefer, upon this occasion, the giving you the sentiments of eminent men to the obtrusion of my own; first laying down two or three general propositions.

I am perfectly aware of the stupendous advantages which our country has derived from machinery, but it does not follow, therefore, that its unlimited use would be wise; on the contrary, we know that machinery by its supercession of human labour has a most depopulating effect—to use the language of political economy, it deprives the land of so many customers: sup-

pose, for instance, that by means of a machine you should be able to transact as much business with one thousand men, as if done by hand would require ten thousand? The land is in that case deprived of nine thousand customers, there being of course a proportionate decrease in population, and therefore in cases where the advantages of machinery do not overbalance so great a political evil, it ought not to be encouraged.

Now in what way is it stated by those who have thought most upon the subject? The wisest men acknowledge the difficulty of drawing the line; they all admit the first evil of machinery, namely, its proportionate depopulation, and the consequent loss to the land of so many customers or consumers. Unable, therefore, to fix precise limits, they lay down certain general rules; as for instance, that unless machinery be necessary to enable you to meet competitors at a foreign market, you should not hastily encourage it, because if you have the foreign trade in your hand, as we have in our case; if you are unrivalled, as it is admitted we are in the woollen trade; if no fault be found with your prices, which is the case with us, and that even the goods manufactured by machinery are sold,



as has been proved to you respecting the gig-mill, as dear as the goods wrought by hand, and are not pretended to be better in quality; then you have none of those high advantages which should alone induce you to risk the evil of depopulation.

I will read a short extract from a work of great reputation, because it generally comprises the thoughts of the ablest men. In Postlethwayte's edition of Savary's Dictionary, it is said, under the titles of Wool, Cloth, and Machinery:

“The increase of our woollen manufactures will keep up the price of the product of the land, as demands for goods not only employ our poor, but cause the advance of the price.

“The products of land in England is a great part of every manufacture; our rents are but the value paid for the products of the lands, therefore all the additional labour we encourage, which pays the product of the lands, is so much added to the rents of the kingdom.

“An increase of wealth may attend a decrease of numbers and real strength, for which reason the balance of money is less to be regarded. The



exports of our nation may at present exceed a million in the lower branches of baize, serges, druggets, and flannels, and this may employ a *million* of hands. In a course of years, we will suppose this trade to be changed for that of wrought works, tapestry, painting, and statuary, in which our exports might amount to *two millions*, but for which a *thousand hands* full employed would be more than sufficient.

“ Here we see it possible that our wealth may be annually increased *a million*, whilst our *real strength* is decreased in the proportion of *a thousand to one*. There is nothing incompatible in the arts of ingenuity, and those of labour: and all the plainer trades may be retained, notwithstanding the higher arts are introduced, in which case we should be both a richer and greater people.

“ In such a variety of reasons it is not easy to determine to what degree the use of machines in general should be admitted. States without commerce regard chiefly the increase of numbers, and their home markets; and commercial states are too apt to consider wealth alone, and foreign markets;—machines, with-

out prejudice to either, may be allowed in the following cases.

“ When they do such business as cannot be performed by hand at all; of this kind are pumps, fire-engines, water-engines, looms, wine and oil-presses, hand-mills for grain, and, perhaps, horse-mills.

“ Where the commodities wrought by them are such as would not be used at all, except they were done by the machine, either being not cheap enough, or not good enough, for consumption, when prepared by hand. Under this head are the mills for making paper, those for forging and slitting iron and copper, fulling of cloth and leather, and making gunpowder.

“ A people without commerce may safely refuse to admit stocking-looms, sawing-mills, throwing-engines, weaving or spinning-engines, mills for striking files, cutting watch wheels, making nails, and all the variety of inventions produced by a rivalry amongst nations contending for commerce, and private men for orders.

“ Commercial states must have their eyes

upon their neighbours, and if they design to engross foreign markets, must provide for the cheapness of labour at home. Goods must be made cheap to render them of general use abroad and at home. Engines for shortening business ought to be rejected, or not admitted in commercial states, when the commodity is not all sold abroad; when it affects not the price of labour, and *when the machines would lessen our home markets more than increase our foreign ones.*"

It will be admitted, certainly, upon the authority of this writer, at least, that machinery should not be used with too much freedom, unless those necessities exist which he describes.

Montesquieu, vol. ii. cap. 16, page 290, says, "those machines which are designed to abridge labour are not always useful: if a piece of workmanship is of a moderate price, such as is equally agreeable to the maker and buyer, those machines, which would render the manufactory more simple, or, in other words, diminish the number of workmen, would be pernicious.

I will trouble the committee with another extract.

M. de Boulainvilliers, in his view of the commercial interests of France, entitled, "Les Interests de la France mal Entendu," tom. iii. p. 272, enters more particularly into the subject.

"A malady," says he, "is expanded over our arts. I would speak of machines which tend to simplify and diminish the labour in our manufactures. The cabinets of our ministers are every day filled with projects for machines proper for lessening the number of hands employed in our fabric. From hence it results, that a multitude of artisans in France are become useless, and must offer their industry to others. I do not speak only of springs and movements, all the manufactures of the kingdom will soon form themselves; they will be in no want of artisans. The *first object* of manufacture is employment, or, what is the same thing, of giving subsistence to a great number of men—wandering from this principle is contradicting the institution itself of the arts, it is diminishing the number of men, for every time



that *we place bounds to subsistence, we do the same to population*; so established is our prejudice, and so generally is it received, that we are come to confound the produce of industry with the means of subsistence, which ought to create industry, two things very different in their principle and object. Let us suppose a manufactory to employ 10,000 citizens, and on the other hand, 500 machines, which produce the same amount of labour, in the same art. It is certain, that the first gives a living to a much greater number of subjects, and therefore completes a much more important object. The maintenance of ten thousand artisans, who draw their subsistence from a branch of industry, forms, in the state, a multitude of other smaller manufactures. But to set the inconvenience of this prejudice in the stronger light, we must begin by curing another:—I speak to those who establish it as a principle, that when a machine diminishes the artisans in one art, that they directly apply themselves to another. Since the taste of mankind is so very refined, and that one great luxury always succeeds another, the arts become so complicated that a man has not time, in the course of his life, to master above one. If he loses that by any accident, he can never have any hope of



replacing it, if it were not so, we should not find, in every revolution which happens in an art, so many idle men, and so great a number of useless subjects. It is objected (and here lies the strength of their system), that machines in diminishing the price of labour bring in great riches to the state, but they do not bring into their account the precarious manner in which these riches are distributed; they concern only a small number of particular persons, *the proprietors of the machines*. They cannot demonstrate geometrically, that a sum of ten millions which circulates among fifty thousand manufacturers, is better for the state than one of an hundred which circulates amongst a thousand."

We have here the sentiments of an able and intelligent Frenchman, holding a high station in the political service of his country; his design was to check the inordinate propensity which then existed towards machinery; he also lays down certain rules as to the wisdom of its application; and those rules may be summed up in the two or three propositions which I have before had the honour of stating, namely, That when machinery is not necessary for the purpose of lowering the price of the commodity—when it is not necessary to be used be-

cause you cannot make the article by hand, which is the case with some articles—when it is not called for in order to produce the article of a more excellent quality than you could render it by human labour—and, when it is not necessary to be used in order to succeed in the foreign market; in these cases you should, according to the writings and opinions of every great man who has treated upon political economy, interpose your authority, and say, so many customers shall not be taken from the land, unless to procure such advantages for the public as will counterbalance their loss.

In the case before you, it appears, from the testimony of the factory-masters themselves, as well as from that of every other adverse witness, who have spoken to that part of the subject; that, independently of the machinery in question, we have been able to complete at foreign markets to such a degree, that we have the trade entirely in our own hands; if so, you are not called upon to inflict that evil upon the landed interest, which in so great a degree, attends the depopulating effects of the gig-mill and shearing-frames.

I have stated this generally, but if I shew

that the particular machine in question, viz. the gig-mill, while destructive to the best interest of my clients, is absolutely injurious in its nature to the fabric, and that it is a machine not newly introduced, but the same which was attempted as far back as the days of Edward the Sixth, and then prohibited for those faults which characterize it now, and are inseparable from it; then my case stands upon the highest ground that it is possible to place it, for not only will it have been shown to be a machine of the most depopulating tendency, and, therefore subject to the general and positive evil alledged, but proved to be as injurious in its application to the fabric now as it was when prohibited by the statute of Edward the Sixth.

It cannot be said that it is not the same machine. Mr. Law Atkinson, like a man of sense and candour, admitted in 1803, and has admitted again this sessions, that it is the very same. An action was tried before Lord Loughborough some years ago, as to its identity; Mr. Atkinson, whose uncle, I believe, was defendant in that cause, says the cause was lost from a defect of proof, but that he never entertained a doubt of its being the same machine

as that which is prohibited by the statute of Edward the Sixth. He adds, indeed, that it is prohibited for unwise reasons—I say, for wise ones; and therein we differ—I having made out, most completely in evidence, that the gig-mill is as injurious in its operation as it is baneful in its effects.

In an address of this nature I can only refer to evidence generally; and I contend that, you had in 1803, and have now, a stream of such testimony as according to the rules of construing evidence must weigh, such, as according to every one of those legal maxims by which courts and juries govern themselves, in its application cannot but prevail. I mean, that it has been proved by the testimony of men who have personally worked at the machine---who have had experience of it in every stage—who have repeatedly examined the cloths both before and after its operation, that it has a tendency to strain the cloth to an infinitely greater degree than when it is dressed by hand. When cloth is dressed by hand it seems it may be stretched or not, according to the choice of the manufacturer, but when dressed by the gig mill it must inevitably be stretched beyond a fair and fit degree, except as to some particular cloths, such



as I shall presently notice, which require very little dressing, and are drawn but a very few times through the mill. It has also been incontestibly proved, that the overstraining produces those injurious and deceptive effects upon the cloth which the witnesses described in 1803, and which were described, deprecated, and forbidden in the days of Edward the Sixth.

All cloth, in proportion as it is attenuated, they admit on both sides, will feel soft; it yields a nice and delicate sensation to the touch, it appears much lighter and will have a greater degree of gloss than when it is done by hand, because it is then less stretched; and I have no doubt but this is the deceitful making assigned as a reason for the statute which prohibits the gig-mill. It will be recollected that the witnesses on the adverse side, when denying these effects charged upon the gig-mill, referred to a kind of cloth which does not come within the argument, it not being capable of distention—viz. friezes, blanketings, and coarse cloths, which they allow, are put *dry* upon the machine; and it is a proposition of natural philosophy, that what is put on in that state will not stretch, it is only when damped or wetted that the cloth will ex-



tend; these friezes, blanketings, and other coarse cloths, are strained by a previous process, and, as it appears, to an amazing length; but it is in evidence they do not receive their extension upon the gigmill, they being put on in a dry state.

The balance of evidence has incontrovertibly proved that the superfine cloths, and the mixed medley cloths of various descriptions, acquire a considerably greater degree of extension than is fit and suited to the fabric. I will refer you to what has been said by the masters themselves, begging leave, first, to recal your attention to one of the propositions with respect to evidence with which I set out, namely, that when *admissions* escape from the adverse party, they are always entitled to the greatest possible degree of attention. This observation will particularly apply to the evidence given by the masters in 1803, which is before you as a part of the case, as well as to that given by them this session.

Mr. E. S. of Uley, in Gloucestershire, admits, upon his cross examination, "that cloth *may be overstrained*, so as to afford an *extraordinary profit* at foreign markets, *without breaking the*

*thread*; that great art is required in using the gig-mill, and that the cloths done by the hired or public mills have been done badly." He admits, you see, that a certain degree of extra straining may take place without breaking the thread, in which state the cloth is pressed and goes to the customer without the damage being discoverable, or if discoverable, only before a strong light by those whose trade it is to examine it; and even, if when the ground is broken, we have abundant proof that it is the custom in those cases, so to fine-draw, flock, and press, as almost to defy detection. But I quote the evidence of this master principally to shew that a great degree of illegal stretching may take place *without breaking the thread*, and without any injury to his interest to be compared with the advantage which he derives from the amount of the cloth so extended.

Another gentleman, a Mr. W. of Dursley, in Gloucestershire, states, upon his cross examination, that his observations are confined to the strong cloths of Gloucestershire. I notice this observation, because if the committee should consider whether they cannot introduce some such qualifications in this business as may heal the unfortunate divisions which prevail; they

will inquire to what cloth the gig-mill can be safely applied, and to what it cannot; some line of demarcation of that kind would perhaps be the wisest course that could be taken for the fabric, and would materially tend to restore peace among the manufacturers. This gentleman, (Mr. W.) allows it to be his opinion, that the medley cloths dyed in the wool will not bear *the pressure of the gig-mill*, like the white cloths of his county; and he goes on to say, “that they leave their lists longer on the cloths meant to be dressed by the gig-mill than on those dressed by hand, *to provide for the necessary degree of straining in the gig-mill*,” he adds, that “some clothiers may stretch them more than his concern does; that the great advantage of gig-dressed cloth is in its *appearance*, and that they sell such cloths for a *higher price* than those done by hand.”

Another gentleman, Mr. E. a clothier of Chippenham, admits, on cross examination, that “the cloths done by the public mills are improperly done; when bracks are made they are fine-drawn and *flocked*, and that if the cloth be more strained *than is usually done by hand*, it feels *softer*.” This latter quality you have been informed will be in proportion to its straining,

Mr. William S. of Frome, in Somersetshire, allows, that “they mill their cloths one yard short in an end, to *bear the force of the gig-mill.*” This, you will observe, is at least, an admission of its greater force, and so far confirms the workmen, who say, that the ordinary application of the gig-mill strains, at least, two yards upon twenty beyond the legal length.

Now as far as admissions from adverse parties have any weight, and it appears to me that they are always entitled to great weight indeed, they make out my case for me, namely, That the mill, in its nature, produces an infinitely greater degree of pressure and straining, and that in its application it has produced much extra illegal and improper straining upon most of the cloths dressed by them, which though not so injured as immediately to hurt the character of the manufacture in the foreign market, yet must have been so made from the nature of this machine, as, by and by, will have a very calamitous effect upon the interest of those who are obliged to follow the trade of a cloth-worker for the maintenance of themselves and families.

I said that I would give you some ide<sub>a</sub>



of the depopulating tendency of this machine. It is admitted that three persons, with the assistance of the gig-mill, would dress about as much cloth as twenty-four persons could dress by hand, and that calculation was made to shew how immense a saving it would be. We must undoubtedly allow that, if the gig-mill will save so much hand labour, it is an irresistible argument in its favour; if not met by the propositions which I before stated; but you will not deprive the land of twenty-one customers out of twenty-four; that is, you will not throw them out of bread unless it be for an adequate political advantage. In this case, I contend that it would not be wise or just so to do, because the gig-mill does not do the work better, because it is not necessary for the maintenance of our preference at foreign markets, because it has not rendered the cloth cheaper, and because our customers are at present satisfied;—in a word, because it has all the disadvantages which political economists decry, without being attended with one advantage sufficient to justify a system of depopulation.

Had we no other proof of its depopulating tendency than merely the evidence with respect to the earnings of the unfortunate persons in

the West of England, where this machine has been principally introduced, it would be sufficient. I have in my hand a calculation, stating their average earnings for the last four years and a half—it is but about fourteen shillings a week; while, in the north, where the mills do not prevail, the workmen get a guinea and a half. Can any thing more completely prove that there are persons ready, and in number sufficient to do by hand all the work that can be required of them, then the fact of good workmen being thus attainable for so scanty a pittance? this fact was stated over and over again, by some of the most respectable master clothiers of the West, in 1803; they said there was a plenty of men for every part of the woollen manufacture; indeed, the adverse masters proved a redundancy of hands, by gravely bringing a surveyor of the high roads before the committee to shew that he had offered work to the immense number of persons thrown out of employ by this fatal machine. He boasted that he had offered them work; that is, he had offered work to persons who had served regular apprenticeships to the woollen manufacture, in the hope of enjoying the privileges legally resulting from a faithful apprenticeship! And what work did he offer them?—why, that they should

break the stones upon the roads, and cleanse them from filth.—That many canals being begun, they should fill barrows with the soil, and wheel it away! He added, that though he himself had offered them this employ, yet were these clothiers fastidious enough to say, they liked cloth-working better than this new and honourable employ of breaking the stones on the road!—When the gig-masters found it necessary to protect themselves from the charge of turning the men out to starvation, they thought it necessary to shew by this witness that they had offered them this sort of work!—that they had offered it to men skilled in working the great staple of the land!—men who had acquired legal privileges by long and faithful servitude!—it is to such men, they say, that they have no right to complain of the calamitous consequences of the gig-mill, since they may find employ in breaking stones upon the road!—in cleansing them from filth!—in filling barrows with the soil, and wheeling it away!

These are the principal observations which I mean to make upon the gig-mill; I will, therefore, next in order, notice the sheering-frames. I shall have something further to say, of course, with regard to the illegal straining of cloth, when

I come to speak of further and recent admissions which appear upon that head. With regard to the sheering-frame, it is nearly, though not precisely, in the same predicament as the gig-mill. The gig-mill stands strictly prohibited by the law in the reign of Edward the Sixth, and those persons who seek to put down the gig-mill, are but of opinion with their ancestors: they only call upon you to enforce the law, which is entitled, "An Act for putting down of Gig-Mills:" and for the same wholesome and wise reasons, namely, to prevent the use of a machine which was declared to be injurious to the fabric then, and is proved to be so now. The sheering-frames, however, are not prohibited in the same distinct form of words, but they are prohibited in spirit and in fact; it is enacted, that no knife, blade, pumice-stone, or thing that shall have a tendency to sheer cloth uneven, shall be used, but that sheers only shall be used for that purpose. With respect to the sheering-frame, the machine itself was not known in those days, but its effect was known, deprecated and forbidden. The sheering-frame is unfortunately within the principle of the gig-mill, it having a tendency of the most cruel and depopulating nature, and is not called for by any one



political reason that can justify its establishment.

• You have heard, Sir, from the masters, one and all; and from many of the questions put by members of this honourable committee, it was plain they inclined to believe that although the gig-mill drives twenty-one out of twenty-four out of employ, yet upon the whole there has not been less employment for the men, it having been asserted that this machine manufactures so great an additional number of cloths, that the twenty-one thrown out of employ by the gig-mill out of every twenty-four, find refuge in the arms of the sheering trade; that is, that as it manufactures so much more cloth, so many more men are necessarily employed in the sheering of it; therefore, said one of the clothiers, though our sheermen objected to the gig-mill at first, they soon became reconciled to it, because they found that it more than compensated them by an increased quantity of labour in another way.

Another gentleman says he called his men together, and stated that fact to them, and they became at length convinced; and Mr. Law Atkinson says that his men have no objection to working after the gig-mill, because as the gig-

mill raises so many more cloths, it makes so much more sheering work for the very persons whose labour in another line it supersedes; and they get so much money on that account, that they are become friends to the gig-mill, that must mean, upon the supposition that the whole of the sheering would be done by hand.

Some consolation of that sort was administered by the evidence of the masters in 1803, and we had even taken a little of it and began to be comforted, when at length came these sheering-frames to swallow up nearly all the manual labour that the gig-mill had spared, for it seems that the twenty-one men out of twenty-four which have been driven out of employ by the gig-mill, and for whom it was pretended the extra sheering would find work, are now to be altogether undone and destroyed by the introduction of frames to perform that task. Is it wonderful that men should sink under these accumulated calamities? Can you be surprised that the thousands and tens of thousands of the petitioners, and their innocent families, should weep and despair under distresses of this kind? I must not be told that in Yorkshire they get from a guinea to a guinea and a half a week, and therefore they should be satisfied. So they

do:—but how do they get it? It has been proved that it is by working from four in the morning till twelve at night; be it so, save them but from the peril of these two machines, and they will not repine at these laborious exertions. In the other parts of England, they are not getting more than fourteen shillings a week; the sheering business which was to get the men into conceit with the gig-mill being itself about to be done away by the sheering-frame, which comes to complete the work of desolation, and to deprive of their remaining labour those hands which were left unemployed from the gig-mill.

I think I can show reasons of the most valid kind against the use of this latter machine. I will not rely for those reasons on the body of evidence which my clients have adduced; but I will, in spite of themselves, draw proofs from the mouths of our adversaries. I will invoke the opposing witnesses, and shew from their own inadvertent admissions, the utter impolicy of using this machine, supposing even that it had none of those cruel and depopulating tendencies with which I charge it. It was stated by the evidence, in chief, who assigned grounds for their judgment, which there is no controverting, because they are natural, and speak for

themselves, that the sheering-frame has this mischievous effect, it will not *sheer even*, and if the cloth is not put on perfectly even, it will knib, that is, catch it with the blade. Now, if it knibs when they sheer by hand, the sensation of the sheerer immediately detects it, and the injury is stopped. The fine-drawers have said that the holes made in the cloth by the sheers are of the size of a pea, or a gun-shot; while, on the other hand, those made by the sheering-frame are generally three or four inches long: the reason is, that when a hole is made, it cannot be detected till the blade, which is some inches broad, and fixed in the frame, has passed over a space equal to its breadth; they then find out that a hole is made, and they stop the machine; but those men who have worked at it themselves in person, and those who have looked over the cloth immediately after, tell you one and all, that such is the nature of the machine. This evil cannot be prevented, however ingeniously the fine-drawer may repair it.

To the evidence of these persons is opposed that of a Mr. B. who describes himself as a very profound man in his way, an expert mechanist, and one who says he has passed all his life among machines of various natures. I am afraid if it



were a question of moral character, we should have little to say to this person upon his own showing, because it seems that after living fourteen years with the traitor Douglas, the fellow that first attempted to get our woollen machinery over to America, and who is now endeavouring to introduce it into France, and is there acting a part that ought to bring him to the gallows, if he could be laid hold of, he favored this Mr. Douglas with his drawings; the better to enable him to transport our staple manufacture to America; I will, however, forget that, let him stand as fair before you as I trust all my witnesses do, and attend only to his evidence. He says the sheering-frame sheers more even than if done by hand. Why? Because, adds he, one motion governs the whole, and after the machine is set, it cannot vary, according to the eternal laws of nature, from that mechanical motion with which it commences its operation. This, he says, is as true as any proposition supported by mathematical demonstration; he says it must have that effect, because when once the machine is fixed, as to its due poise, it goes on and sheers *even*: well, but suppose the cloth should be previously *raised uneven*, how does it do then? for if the machine cannot vary, if it cannot go to the right or to the left when, the

cloth comes uneven from the gig-mill to this machine, as is proved to be frequently the case, the effect must necessarily be to cut it most injuriously from that very undeviating regularity of its motion, which Mr. B. speaks of as its great perfection.

Now, the sheermen have the cloth placed before them, and if one part of it be balky in the ground, and in another part the nap is scarcely raised, or if the cloth be in any way uneven, they govern their sheers accordingly; they move them lightly over the balky place, and press them more forcibly where the nap is left too long. The sheering frame cannot, in the nature of things, be so managed; because, as Mr. B. tells you, one motion governs it from the beginning to the end.

It has been admitted by the masters, that the greater part of the cloths are *raised* at public mills, and that public mills raise the cloths uneven, and it is most clear that every cloth which is *raised uneven*, whether from ignorance or accident, must of necessity be injuriously cut by the sheering-frame when it comes to the uneven part of it. The regulating power which has been boasted of by some, even Mr. B. was not

prepared to affirm, when I asked him if he could tell if a hole were made in the cloth by the sheering-frame till it had passed over, and reminding him of what had been said by the sheermen: viz. that they could *feel* instantly as the sheers in their hands knibbed. We make it out, says Mr. B. partly by *the sound*—the sound of a hole! What, says an honourable member, does the hole sound before it is made? This question put Mr. B. a little to his trumps, he gave up his exquisite sensation of sound, and then said, that if a person were extremely watchful, and kept his eye upon that particular spot, and saw that a hole was made, he could stop the machine before it got to be three or four inches, or whatever might be the breadth of the blade. Now you will recollect their boast to be that one man looks after half a dozen of these machines, for in that consists the great saving of labour. They say it is not necessary to have a man after each machine, as you have after a pair of sheers, but that one man superintends half a dozen of them; then I should be glad to know how, even with Mr. B's. faculties, a hole is to be discovered instantaneously, as is the case when a man sheers by hand, who can tell by sight as well as by sensation, the moment the sheers knib or catch the cloth.

My humble argument then is this, if the sheering-frame is liable to the legal objection made in early days against *sheering uneven*; if it is not called for by any political necessity; but that on the contrary, while it swallows up the whole of the labour left from the desolation of the gig-mill, it operates injuriously to the fabric; you will surely think it right to prohibit, by name and description, that which already stands prohibited by the law of the land, as to its principle and effect. I find that this is a machine which the masters are less disposed to persist in the use of than any other. Many masters that have been before you, state that it is but very partially used. Two of the masters state that they do not use it, they do not want it; and that if they could but have the free use of the gig-mill, all their cloths should be sheered by hand. Indeed the evidence of the fin drawers is at once a proof of the mischievous nature of the machine, and their own exquisite skill in repairing holes of such magnitude. Mr. Dyer, I remember said, expressly, he liked hand-sheering best. I notice those sentiments because I am convinced of the absolute necessity that exists for something like an amicable arrangement of this business, something like a softening of that high tone with which the



workmen have been treated, and being warranted by the evidence in saying, that the prohibition of the sheering-frame, which would afford so much consolation and protection to the men, is a matter of comparative indifference to the masters, I earnestly hope and entreat, that some qualification of that kind may be suggested in your report to the house.

The general answer which I understand is given to the arguments I have offered respecting the gig-mill and the sheering-frame, is an answer which, I am sorry to say, is more and more coming into fashion. I know not how it is, but a sort of commercial jacobinism seems to have succeeded to the political jacobinism which lately afflicted and infested the the world; it is indeed urged with more silence, but it is moving with infinite subtlety, and I am afraid will be found almost as mischievous.

The modern cant is, that mens' own interest is a sufficient security for their observance of right, that the contrary will work its own punishment, and that every thing is sure to find its level,

Our ancestors, it seems, were all wrong—

even up to the 13th of Geo. III. we were in the woods. We have been from the days of Richard II. making laws respecting the woollen manufacture for men who want no laws; every thing, again they cry, "Will find its level." These new doctors answer all my objections by way of interrogatory, and exclaim, "Can you think a man would be so blind to his own interest as to send to market cloth that is not manufactured in the best manner? or that if stretching it beyond the length allowed by law, deteriorated the commodity, he would be so absurd as to do it?" Strings of questions of this nature were put to the masters, who have been gravely called to state to the committee their exalted ideas of the honor of the woollen manufacturers. This is like calling upon a smuggler for his opinion of the revenue laws. The masters whom the woollen laws were instituted to controul, are absolutely the only evidence called to prove the wisdom of dispensing with them, and to shew the folly and extravagance of our ancestors, who thought restrictions respecting this trade to be wise and necessary.

But I do not need to combat this proposition, for it defeats itself; you might as well talk of morals finding their level as manufactures.

Were men not as virtuous seven years ago as they are now?—Was not the powerful principle of self-interest as predominant then as it is now?—Was it not the interest of the master then to make the best possible article?—and yet the legislature, up to that period, or within a few years of it, thought it necessary to continue the care and watchfulness of preceding Parliaments, in order to insure a good fabric. The legislature, time after time, in different reigns, from the 13th of Richard the Second, up to the 5th of George the Third, has made law after law, for the better regulation of the woollen manufacture, till by a succession of statutes introduced, as new frauds or faults discovered themselves, this great staple has attained to the reputation which has produced our affluence. It is this high reputation which we are anxious to maintain. We, the great body of its artisans live but by the fame of the fabric, which cannot be destroyed without destroying us, when that dies we shall sink and be extinguished.

There is, I believe, a Bill now before the House, which I mention from the strictness of its analogy to the present subject; it proposes that the butchers, whom our foolish ancestors thought

it right to prevent from flaying beasts wantonly and improperly, thereby injuring our leather-staple, should be left upon this subject to their interest, and their honour ! It is not more than three years since the legislature thought there was something required besides this universal principle of self-interest, and they obliged the butchers to take off the hides with proper care, under certain penalties. The butchers, I understand, apply to be relieved from this odious obligation, and they argue that the state may rest safely assured that they will not hurt their own interest, by doing injury to the hides. But, Sir, in all cases we find the *immediate* interest operate more powerfully than the *remote*. This is a distinction that does not appear yet to have found its way into the new philosophy, though it is evidently that which has hitherto governed the legislature throughout the whole series of its enactments.

Are we any of us so insensible to experience as not to know that every deviation from moral rule is *impolitic*, to say nothing of its being bad and wicked in itself? and yet does every such departure proceed from our preferring a present indulgence to a remote interest !—These masters will get fortunes by the extra straining of



their cloths, before this new philosophy, this emancipation from restraint, can produce its mischievous effects upon the fabric. What will be to them the loss of its reputation? they will by that time have accomplished their object of gaining speedy independence, and seated snug at their villas, perhaps, be laughing at the folly which listened to their arguments, which exchanged the progressive wisdom and experience of five hundred years for manufacturing sentimentality, and risked the high reputation of the great staple of the country, rather than the infallibility of a theory which preceding ages have treated with the scorn it deserves !

If the straining of cloth beyond a given degree had not been improper in itself, how came our ancestors so tenaciously to guard against it, and to have said, that though, in the course of the process of your manufacture you may perhaps inevitably, or occasionally, overstrain one yard upon twenty, yet beyond that one yard you shall not go. If all restraint is to be abolished, as contended for; if the masters are to be perfectly at liberty to stretch their cloths to what extent they can, let us apply that licence to the argument of self-interest, and inquire how far the latter principle may be regarded as

a sufficient security for that reputation upon which solely depends the wonderful extent of our foreign trade in this article. A very respectable master, who has a gig-mill, was called before you in 1803, the average of whose manufacture appeared to be about thirty pieces of cloth per week. The witnesses, you must recollect, have uniformly stated the extra straining of the cloth to average, at least, *two* yards in twenty above the legal measure. I took the trouble to calculate what it would produce to such a man if he got only *one* yard in twenty above the legal length, although the greatest part of the evidence states that *two* yards may be obtained without *breaking the thread*; that is, the manufacturer may get an immense deal of money between the usual degree of extension by the gig-mill, and that degree which it is said would be its own punishment, by inducing the rejection of the article. Allowing, however, but *one* yard upon twenty, above the legal measure, the maker would, by such extra straining, get upon the manufacture of thirty pieces per week, 1989*l.* per annum;—the pieces run about thirty yards in length, a yard and a half upon thirty, is, of course, equal to a yard upon twenty;—a yard and half, at 17*s.* 6*d.* per yard, is 1*l.* 5*s.* 6*d.*

each piece;—thirty pieces, at 1*l.* 5*s.* 6*d.* is 38*l.* 5*s.* per week, or 1989*l.* per annum;—Can you then imagine any kind of doctrine more delusive than that men will neglect their immediate and personal interest, for a remote and general advantage,—that for the sake of the future reputation of the fabric at the foreign market, they would, when relieved from the present prohibition of the law, forbear a practice by which the immense immediate advantage of two thousand a year is to be obtained upon thirty pieces per week? Supposing the extra straining to be but half of what is stated by almost every witness—is this charge of illegal straining without further confirmation?—One of the Yorkshire master's, who is a respectable magistrate in that county, was called: an honourable member of the committee reminded him of the unfortunate circumstance which led to the loss of the Russian market; namely, that a Russian brigade, newly clothed with English cloth, happening to be exposed to a drenching shower, their coats shrunk into waistcoats. Mr. C. the witness, admitted the anecdote, and added, that they had the most exorbitant demands made upon them by the German factors and merchants, on account of extraordinary straining! Now, if the fact of over-

straining was not become more notorious, and if the consciousness of it had not induced occasional abatement in the charges on that account, is it likely that such demands would be made? It shews the idea is spreading upon the Continent, that our cloths are more strained than they ought to be, and this may be attended, by and by, with the utter disrepute of our manufacture. If the bare impression of such a fact is capable of doing so much national mischief, what will be the effect upon the mind of the foreign purchaser, when he learns that Parliament has thought proper to take off every restriction, and say to the manufacturers, go on and strain as much as you please—settle it between yourselves and the Germans, Dutchmen, &c. the legislature will no longer interfere? If your own interest is not sufficient to restrain you from over stretching the cloth, in God's name strain it as much as you like, we will have nothing more to do with it, we know that every thing will find its level, and that you, at length, will be punished for your cupidity!—Are you prepared, Sir, for the consequence of such an idea getting abroad? Are you prepared for the conclusion which foreigners must, of necessity, come to, the moment that they know that you have withdrawn from



the woollen manufacture all protective and prohibitory laws? Can you even hope that the loss of its confidence will not follow the annunciation of their repeal? As wise and intelligent men, you cannot but expect that those suspicions which the masters themselves have proved to be already alive upon the Continent, will amount to confirmed opinion, when they learn that, whether a manufacturer shall overstrain his cloth one yard or six upon twenty is no longer a question of law, but a matter to be settled between the vender and the purchaser!

I hope I have now given something like an answer to this new-fangled proposition of self-interest being a sufficient check upon the manufacturer without the aid of the law. I have shown, that by departing from the existing law, he can get from 2000*l.* to 4000*l.* a year, without discovery. The masters themselves admit, as you will see in the evidence, that this moderate degree of illegal straining is scarcely within the possibility of being found out, after the cloth has been pressed and folded for sale; it does not even call for the fine-drawer, who is only wanted when the thread is broken or cut. This mischief, when the law is repealed, can have no corrective, except what it may

receive five or six years hence, when it shall be found to have deeply affected, if not destroyed, the reputation of the fabric. The manufacturer may henceforth overstrain his cloth without its affecting his moral reputation; for the moment the law of repeal shall have passed, it will be a contest who shall strain most in order to get most. There will be no longer those little idle contests about yards and half-yards, but the race will be who shall extend<sup>the</sup> the cloth to the greatest degree, without so<sup>on</sup> palpably injuring it as to defy the skill of the hot-presser and the fine-drawer.

The effect of such conduct is already most serious, and had not a single master been called, and had not a single admission been wrung from them, I think that the evidence of Mr. Lambert must have been decisive of this case.

This person is a servant in one of the first houses in town. He is, by profession, an overlooker or examiner of cloths for the drapers; that is, when the draper looks out a certain quantity of cloths at the warehouse of the factor, they are sent to a person whose peculiar business it is to examine and report upon them. Mr. Lambert tells you he examined, at least, two

hundred cloths a week for various drapers; that by far the greatest proportion of those which pass through his hands are dressed by the gig-mill; and that he pursues a mode which cannot fail of detecting the injury, if any be done, to the cloth. He begins with taking out the press, that is, getting off the gloss, he can then discern what injuries there are; and he tells you, that out of two hundred cloths he is obliged to throw aside a considerable number, sometimes thirty or forty, as unsaleable or much injured. This man stood as severe an ordeal of cross examination as any witness that has been called. He was asked, who were his masters?—what was the name of the other foreman?—and, what was the name of his colleague who looked over the cloths with him? I expected, and hoped from these questions, that they would all have been sent for; unfortunately they were not, and this was the only reason why I forbore calling the foremen of two other eminent houses in the same line, who were put down as witnesses on my brief. Mr. Lambert, I repeat, stood a most severe cross examination; it was endeavoured to make him say he did not know the gig-dressed from the hand-dressed cloth, except by the place which they came from, though that would have been

enough, because the gig-masters are as well known from the hand-masters, as the distinction between these gentlemen sitting here and myself. The gig-cloths are known as coming from a gig-master, and the hand-dressed cloths as coming from a hand-master. He is asked if he can tell from his *judgment*, and he shews you that he can to a moral certainty. How, it is inquired, can he distinguish the one from the other? He says, that the gig-cloth is looser; it feels more hollow in the hand, and the injuries are of a different nature from those which he finds in the hand-dressed cloths. He examines all the hand-dressed cloths which come from an eminent manufacturer in the West of England, and in the course of the last two years he has not had occasion to return five of them; while, on the other hand, he is constantly obliged to object to a great number of the gig-dressed cloths. Well, but do not the drapers take them notwithstanding? Yes, they do, when in want of particular colours, and at particular periods when the demand is too pressing to wait. I do not, says he, absolutely put them on one side unless they are materially damaged, and even then, the drapers will sometimes have them fine-drawn, and put up with them, rather than not have the article for sale.



It is thus proved, not only that damaged goods are bought, but that this argument of self-interest is not a security against such damage, the want of the article is great and pressing, and whatever may be its state, it is folded up and sent to the draper in London. But can you, as legislators, interested in taking care that the article shall be good in its nature—can you avoid feeling the circumstance of this great proportion of deteriorated cloths out of the number stated?—And, does it not forcibly strike you, that though the urgency of the demand may compel the trade to pass over such defects rather than not have cloths for the execution of their orders—yet, that when peace returns, and when there shall be a choice of markets, the consequence of exporting such cloths may lose us the foreign purchaser?

You have also obtained another extremely important fact from this witness. You have learned from him, that the cloths, whether over-strained at the tenter, or by gig-dressing, go abroad in that state of extension:—those intended for home consumption, especially for the London wear, are damped and cold-pressed, the damping drives them in, perhaps, half a

yard upon twenty ; but the cloths meant for the foreign market are not damped, but merely pressed, which does not drive them in more than a very few inches at most, so that in whatever state of extension they come from the manufacturer, in that state, or nearly so, they go abroad ; the foreign purchaser thus paying for as much more than he ought, as they have been extended beyond the legal length. I ask, can the foreign trade long survive such practices as are here indubitably proved ? You remember, that Mr. E. one of the Yorkshire masters, imagining himself not to be within the limits of the stamping act, admits that the coarser kind of woollen cloths are strained in the proportion of five yards upon twenty-five. The article could not be made, he says, without this extension, though he adds, for our comfort, that it goes in again by degrees in proportion as it becomes exposed to the air. But, suppose it is sent away instantly, and shipped before it has time to be thus exposed, it does go in to be sure, and even then it goes in by degrees ; but it is as our great coats go in, that is, upon the wearers backs ! I had a great coat made the other day, so large, it appeared almost ridiculous, yet the first symptom of a shower which I experienced, a mere misling rain for an hour or two, so shrunk it,

that in the evening I protest I could scarcely button it. Mr. E. says, truly, that these cloths shrink back towards the legal length every time they are exposed to the air; but, unfortunately, our character as a great trading nation suffers in the mean time, and diminishes with every yard of cloth that goes abroad.

I come now, Sir, to the third part of my subject, namely, the searchers and sealers. It may, perhaps, be put to me as it was put to one of my witnesses:—Do you imagine that the cloth-workers and sheermen care three farthings about the searchers or the length of their cloth, or the injury done by the sheering-frame. Have they, who are mere workmen, any feeling or care whether the cloth is spoiled or not? why then do they make the searchers and sealers so material a point of their case? My answer is, that these rich master clothiers, who in a few years will be all great men, have less interest in the reputation of the fabric than we who are workmen; we are bound down, as it were, by fate; we have no hope beyond that of obtaining a comfortable return for an honest and laborious life; we have no prospect of employment but according to the pre-eminent reputation of the manufacture; we have nothing

to look to for ourselves and our children but the woollen trade, and the being occupied therein; and, therefore, its reputation is a concern of the nearest kind to us, and we conscientiously believe, that if one thing more than another can maintain that reputation, it is the vigilance of searchers and sealers; we therefore urge you rather to give new life and strength to those salutary laws which appointed them, than to listen to the selfish suggestions of those who are compelled to act fairly by the public when these men do their duty. Our ancestors were of opinion, that searchers and sealers were useful; and, therefore, from very early times up to so recent a period as the 5th George the Third, they have thought it wise to appoint and to continue them; the evidence before you has, beyond all possibility of contradiction, proved that these men are highly useful, and it has been shewn that where they attend and are supported in their duty, there has been no illegal and improper straining; but that where they are known to be in the habit of non-attendance; where they are complaisant enough to stay away upon an understanding with the masters, the direct contrary takes place. If you believe the witnesses, you must be satisfied that the searcher being present and doing



his duty, when the cloth is taken from the tenter, prevents the iniquity of illegal straining, if so, is not that enough to establish the necessity of continuing those laws which enjoin their attendance?

I questioned one of the masters in this manner:—"If an avaricious master were so disposed, could he not have his cloth strained as many as two yards upon twenty, beyond the legal length, without injuring the appearance of the cloth?" "It would not be to his interest:" was the answer I received. "Never mind interest. Have the goodness to say whether if the master should be so disposed, he could not have his cloth overstrained so many yards!" "I do not know:" was the answer. "But if the master should be so disposed, (I again asked), and the men had their proper cue, could not he have his cloth strained, even when dressed by hand, one or more yards upon twenty beyond the legal length?" At last we got an answer; Mr. D. who went so smoothly over the stones through out the whole of his evidence, and whom I did not choose to interrupt, knowing the admission I should wring from him; even Mr. D. at last, acknowledged, that if a master were so disposed, the thing might be done. I believe

Mr. D. is what is called a crack-master; that he is more particular about his cloths than any other man, and I believe also, that not one of the iniquities I charge are imputable to his mode of conducting his business.

But still this gentleman, you see, when further urged, admits that the thing could be done if the master were so disposed. If then the thing can be done, will you not, as legislators, prevent it? or rather, I ask, will you not refuse to listen to those applications which desire you to take off all restraint, and repeal the prohibitory laws?—which desire you to proclaim it in every foreign market upon the Continent, that our manufacturers of woollen cloth are at length relieved from all legal obligation, and that they must henceforth trade with the British clothier upon the principle of universal suspicion; that they must believe every Englishman to be a rogue and deal with him accordingly; that they must henceforth examine well the length of their cloths, for that the manufacturers are no longer under restriction; that every thing being sure to find its level, self-interest is henceforth to be looked up to as the standard for security! Mr. D. as I have shown, admits the thing may be done—he ad-

mits more—he admits that some of the cloths are in fact strained above one yard in twenty more than the legal length. But then, says he, we put substance into our cloths accordingly. Perhaps they may, but that at least proves the illegal straining to take place, which is enough for my argument, it is drawn from themselves, and shows the necessity of continuing legislative prevention.

Another species of iniquity takes place, which I own I was not aware of till lately; nor should I have known it now but for that candour and honour with which Mr. Law Atkinson has conducted himself throughout the whole of the business. It had been intimated to me that in proportion to the understanding between the master and journeymen, this sort of fraud takes place, namely, that when cloths are taken from the tenter, though notoriously overstrained, nevertheless the length is found to correspond with the seal put on at the fulling-mill. I had been informed, that by some management at the fulling-mill, it was not unusual to put on seals there denoting a longer length than the cloth actually measured, so as to allow for subsequent straining. Though this had been suggested to me by my clients, I own I could hardly ven-

ture to put the question, doubting, myself, the existence of so impudent a fraud; at last I put it fairly to Mr. Law Atkinson, whether it was not so. He admitted his belief that such a practice did take place, and perhaps too frequently amongst fraudulent masters; or else, says he, how could those accounts which I myself put in, shew a less degree of ultimate length after all the process had been gone through, than appears from the seals put on at the fulling-mill? unless something of this kind had been practised upon ourselves, such would have been impossible. You will find this, Sir, one of the greatest sources and items of fraud; and that though it is true that the clothiers are within the letter of the law, when their cloths are not stretched beyond the length sealed at the fulling-mill, yet you will be satisfied from the evidence of that gentleman, and from other evidence which appears on your minutes, that a false seal is frequently put on, which is meant to allow for the illegal straining and stretching of the cloth. Now, will a legislative committee endure that those legal restrictions shall be repealed which can alone prevent such imposition upon the foreign purchaser and the domestic consumer. I must not be told that the difficulty lies in getting men



to do their duty ; does not the same difficulty lie with respect to the customs and excise ? Such an objection is about as weighty as the universal argument of self-interest ; which, if trusted to, would keep the manufacturers in no better order than universal philanthropy, or any other principle of mere public spirit. I must not, therefore, I say, be told that you cannot get officers to do their duty. How do you get them to do their duty in the other departments under government, but by introducing such checks, and making such arrangements as to render it almost impossible for fraud to escape detection ? It is no argument to say the thing would be very good if you could enforce it, to lament over your imbecility, and to deplore your want of power. Pay the searchers better. The clothiers well know, and it is in evidence before you, that the searchers have not the common means of living, if they do their duty—that they are cast for sustenance upon betraying their trust—that their families must starve if they were faithful, so scanty is their allowance ; while, on the other hand, he is liberally rewarded if he refrains from visiting them, or makes his visits in a complaisant way. The allowance which they must trust to for their

livelihood is not for looking over the cloths; but for *their non-examination.*

The utility of the searchers was further, though very unwillingly admitted by another of the masters: I think it was Mr. K. I asked him if the searchers visited him sometimes?—he was of opinion that they are a very troublesome impertinent set, and that the sooner they are got rid of the better. In what way, said I, have they been troublesome to you? Why are you so anxious to get rid of these men who so seldom come near you?—why they came once, and one of them threatened to inform against me because my cloth was without the seals, but I set him at defiance, says he, for I knew the cloth had been sold and returned, and it was not necessary that returned cloth should have the seals. I knew the searcher was in the wrong box, and I told him he might do his worst. But suppose, said I, Mr. K. that you had been a man of a different character to what you undoubtedly are, and that a real fraud had been meditated, would not the vigilance of the searcher upon this occasion have prevented it? Yes, said he, if I had meant to be fraudulent, he would certainly have prevented me.—Then, as there are some men to be found in all trades who will be fraudulent,

is it nothing, I ask, for the pre-eminence of our staple manufacture, nothing for our reputation abroad, and our consequent export trade, nothing for our consumers at home, to take care by the due maintenance of legislative provisions, that this commodity be produced in the utmost possible degree of perfection, and that fair and honest dealings should be, as much as possible rendered inseparable from our commercial character.

Sir, this brings me to the last division of my case, namely, the law and system of apprenticeship. I do not feel myself under the necessity of going very much at large into it. I stated in my opening address, that the abrogation of the system of apprenticeship appeared to me to be one of the most awful propositions ever submitted to the legislature. It is not enough to shew that a weaver or a cloth-worker can get a knowledge of his trade in a few months or a few years ! How long, I ask, is a boy learning to be a haberdasher or a grocer, or any other retail trade ? They require no skill, and yet apprenticeship to them is universal ; and who shall say that the superior morals of our countrymen have not been owing to the prevalence of a system which places youth under proper controul during that most critical period of life,

when even parental authority is not so effectual as the authority of the master? A parent cannot, consistently with his fond feelings, exercise that strict authority over his son which the master does over his apprentice, from fourteen to twenty-one. During this important period, the master is the fittest governor, and I cannot but impute all the real, substantial, and moral happiness of the commercial part of mankind, to the most excellent system of apprenticeship. It is a custom which has prevailed time out of mind, till within these few years, that in some parts of the country it has been relaxed, principally owing to the introduction of machinery, and the factory system. It will be seen whether even machinery cannot be administered with as much effect, and the child at the same time derive all the advantages of a rational system of apprenticeship. Apprenticeship is not a thing of yesterday, it is like the common law of the land: it has existed from time, to the contrary whereof the memory of man runneth not. I know no period of its commencement. The Act of Elizabeth does not create it, but recognises its long existence, and professes to bring all the laws with respect to apprentices into one Act, the more effectually to enforce them. The Act of Elizabeth may be as obsolete now, as those laws were which it



reviewed, when it re-enacted such as were wholesome, and introduced such new ones as experience had rendered necessary ; but the system has existed throughout all British antiquity, because it is both a moral and political institution. Will any man say that apprenticeship is confined to commercial views and commercial objects ? Will any man say that it ought to depend upon a mere motive of trading, or manufacturing policy ? Will not every person who has thought upon the subject, who has read a single treatise upon political economy, or has looked through the acts of our ancestors, admit that one of the great reasons of apprenticeship is, that youth should be under a particular moral restraint during the most dangerous period of their lives, rather than be left at large, as proposed by those who seek the repeal of the apprentice laws ? Was it not evidently meant that they should receive the rudiments of their trade in one service, and under one master, in preference to being allowed to work for whom or where they please, as now proposed ; and this at a time of life when the best of us are said proverbially to be unfit to be our own masters ; at a time of life when even among the higher circles, every pain is taken to interpose authority between youth and its passions, between the temptations with which it is

beset, and the liberty to plunge into vice. What rank of society is there so high as not to consider the youth of its class as fit subjects of some restraint and authority different from that of the parent? and is not the fondest parent the most anxious to place them in this state of temporary subjugation? Who then shall have nerve enough to say that by one act of legislative licence they will set afloat the great body of the passions, of the most helpless part of society; that part which, from poverty and the want of education, is the most subject to error, the most liable to temptation, and the least capable of resisting it? What! while law and policy continue to enforce apprenticeship among the better classes of the trading community, as is the case throughout the whole city of London; and while over high born youths you impose guardians, tutors, and curators of all descriptions, will you expose the little helpless progeny of our working population to those ills of soul and body which you tremble to think of when applying the danger to those whose happier fortunes afford them every means of instruction and security? I submit to the committee that whether looked at in a moral or political point of view, the strongest objections present themselves against that freedom from restraint

which you are urged to enact. If you give way in this instance, it would be absurd to argue that the abrogation of apprenticeship will be confined to the woollen trade, and that it will not extend to all the various other branches of manufacture. No man can imagine for a moment that you can do away apprenticeship among the clothiers, and support it among the manufacturers of leather, iron, and other articles. You must annihilate the system altogether, or you must have the courage to enforce it in this manufacture as well as in others. I do not mean that you need enforce it according to the extent of the statute of Elizabeth, that is in many respects an obsolete statute. I do not say that it is absolutely necessary that apprenticeship shall be for seven years. I do not say that you shall not listen to the observation of an honourable member, which I felt forcibly when it was urged, namely, that when one youth is bound an apprentice, and sees another working by his side who is not bound, getting five or ten shillings a week, while he is getting nothing, he will feel great uneasiness and impatience. In order to legislate wisely, you must undoubtedly legislate according to the temper of human nature. But who will deny that a system of apprenticeship might not be adopted, improved by all

that experience can now suggest. If seven years be inconvenient, say six, or even five years. If it be necessary to give to youth progressive wages, in God's name let it be so; but surely all this might be done consistently with that degree of domestic relationship and moral restraint which I have stated as absolutely essential to the temporal and eternal welfare of our British youth!

I have said I would rather read the sentiments of others, than trouble you much with my own. I will state in a few words what Mr. Justice Blackstone says upon the subject, it is in vol. i. of the Commentaries, page 428.

“Persons serving seven years as apprentices, to any trade, have an exclusive right to exercise that trade in any part of England. This law, with regard to the exclusive part of it, has by turns been looked upon as a hard law, or as a beneficial one, according to the prevailing humour of the times, which has occasioned a great variety of resolutions in the courts of law concerning it, and attempts have been frequently made for its repeal, though hitherto without success.



“ At common law, every man might use what trade he pleased, but this restrains that liberty to such as have served an apprenticeship. The adversaries to which provision say, that all restrictions (which tend to introduce monopolies) are pernicious to trade. The advocates for it allege, that unskilfulness in trade is equally detrimental to the public as monopolies. This reason, indeed, only extends to such trades in exercise whereof skill is required; but another of their arguments goes much further, namely, that apprenticeships are useful to the commonwealth, by employing of youth, and learning them to be early industrious; but that no one would be induced to undergo a seven years apprenticeship, if others, though equally skilful, were allowed the same advantages, without having undergone the same discipline: in this there seems to be much reason.”

Ours is not the only country that venerates this system. We are continually quoting the wisdom and the enterprise of the French. The law of apprenticeship was infinitely more rigorously administered there than here. I find the following passage in Postlethwaytes translation of Monsieur Savary's Commercial Dictionary,

who evidently accompanies the text with sentiments of his own, viz.

“ The commerce of a nation depends on the excellency of its manufactures, and those again on the skill, ingenuity, and dexterity of its manufacturers, and artificers of every kind. On these considerations we may presume that the French have made such laws to oblige their artists to make themselves thorough masters of their respective trades, and to exclude them from the freedom of the several corporations of arts and trades, unless they are capable of performing with their own hands what they call a master-piece of workmanship, that is such a piece of workmanship as will shew a young man master of his business, and this must not be done in a corner, but in the presence of those sworn for the purpose.

“ The national benefit of this policy will further appear, from considering the disadvantage Great Britain must inevitably sustain in her commerce, were her manufactures to degenerate in their ingenuity and dexterity.

“ However slight some people may make of these considerations upon apprentices, yet the breeding up our young people properly to trade,

in every branch of it, seems a matter of the last consequence to a trading nation, and may one time or other be found worthy some people thinking of, when they are once convinced of this important truth, that traders alone are the source of all their treasures, and consequently of all their splendor and magnificence.

“ Since such exquisite skill in the manual operation is required by all any way practically concerned in the woollen manufacture ; do not all our national advantages arise from the woollen manufacturers, who are to act in every part hereof, for they are not bred in *a few years*. Ought not the wisdom of the nation to be alarmed at the daily artifices which are used to decoy and instigate our artists and manufacturers out of the kingdom, to the emolument of other countries, and the certain ruin of this ? And can any thing effectually do this but giving them all due and reasonable encouragement ? ”

It was apprehended by an honourable Baronet to whom it is impossible not to pay the greatest attention, that when we talk of maintaining apprenticeships, we, in fact, mean to prohibit the infantine classes from working, as they do now in factories ;—Not at all ; they may continue

to be employed till they arrive at an age fit to be put apprentice to learn the trade, which they will do so much the sooner from their previous experience. But what I contend for is, the continuation of that system of apprenticeship which binds the youth from fourteen years of age to twenty-one, unless you should think proper to qualify the term of its duration. It appeared, by the evidence of 1803, that in the West of England there is scarce a cloth-worker or sheerman who has not served seven years to the trade. The system, it is true, has been much relaxed in Yorkshire. In Gloucestershire there is a substitute for it, which they call colting. I put this question to several of the masters:—"If a system of apprenticeship were adopted, giving a youth progressive wages according to his skill and merit, but still keeping him under the eye and authority of his master, would it not be infinitely better, and more conducive to his moral and general welfare, than allowing him, as proposed, to work for whom he pleases and for what he can get?"

The answer was always in the affirmative. But it was added, that masters would not be troubled with apprentices. I admit that this objection may apply to the higher classes of



modern masters, and I regret that it does, but it does not apply to the general description of masters in the woollen trade, the mass of whom are not so elevated or so fashionably averse to domestic trouble and duty. Allow me to observe, that you are sitting here to inquire what may be best to legislate for the future, and if you should think that some improved plan of apprenticeship would be infinitely preferable to the annihilation of that almost paternal system, you will recommend it with such other improvements as may suggest themselves for the future government of the woollen manufacture.

But, take it, that persons in elevated stations may say, We cannot endure these troublesome rogues under our roof. Let them, in that case, discharge their duty by deputy—let the foremen, or others whom the masters may appoint, receive the apprentices into their houses and families, and exercise over them, as far as may be, a delegated authority. Is there not ten thousand degrees of difference between that and letting these little premature journeymen and journeywomen roam at large, and be at their own disposal? It seems to me that if the foreman, as is not unusually the case, or

other honest and worthy people were to receive three, four, or half-a-dozen at a time, of these young people, into their respective families, it might be rendered an object to themselves, and would get rid of one of the principal objections made by these sensitive masters to the burthensome part of apprenticeship.

I beg it to be recollected, that not one witness has ventured to say there could be any material difference in the term now considered as necessary for the bringing up of a *cloth-worker and sheerman*. Even Mr. Law Atkinson speaks of three or four years as the shortest time in which a lad could be fitted for that branch of the business; so that the question, as it relates to my clients, remains almost untouched, respecting the necessity of an apprenticeship for seven years. It does not at all follow, that masters should not employ children as they do now, till they get to be thirteen or fourteen years of age, but when they arrive at that age let them become domesticated—let them then, at least, be under moral government, and learn the nature of the manufacture in its various branches as their fathers have done before them, through the medium of a legal apprenticeship.

These are the points which I have thought it my duty, as generally as I could, to submit to the committee.

When in the first and second place I took the liberty to call your attention to the subject of machinery, I did not think it necessary again to notice the cruel and malignant falsehood which I have so often refuted, namely, that my clients oppose machinery *in general*, there is not a member of this honourable committee but now fully understands; and I hope, that from the fidelity of their report it will soon be understood by the House and by the whole public, that the only machines which we object to the toleration of, are those, which in letter and spirit, stand already prohibited by law. I implore the committee to recollect that machinery may be abused as well as used. I beg they will have the goodness to consult those authorities which have drawn the line between the one and the other; and, above all, to recollect not only that *no necessity* in a political point of view has been shown for the gig-mill and shearing-frame, but that they have been proved to be in themselves absolutely as injurious to the fabric now, as they were in the reigns of Edward the Sixth, and of Philip

and Mary, when the former was specifically put down, and the effect of the latter deprecated and prohibited. Nothing can be more fully proved than the fact of their depopulating tendency, except those other facts, which we have equally proved, namely, that they yield no adequate compensation for this great public evil and private calamity, either from the quality or quantity of the cloth which they dress.

I endeavoured to show, in the third place, the advantage of continuing, invigorating, and supporting a system of searching and sealing, and I have most abundantly proved, that where the officers have attended to their duty and visited the tenters, the cloths have not been unduly stretched; while, on the contrary, in those instances in which they have been seduced, or terrified from asserting their function, or, as has been the case for the last three or four years, been persuaded the Suspension Bill forbids their interference, such a deterioration of the commodity has taken place, as must, if the present relaxation from the searching laws were to continue, deeply affect your foreign trade, and



that perhaps at no very remote period. If the mere relaxation of those laws have done so much mischief, what have we not to dread from their proclaimed repeal? from that complete release from all restraint, now so earnestly called for by the master-clothiers and their philosophical advocates? Sir, in the fixed opinion that the woollen manufacture, considered as the staple of England, cannot long survive the proposed alteration of system, I confidently assure myself that it will not have the countenance of this honourable committee.

I lastly submitted, That, profiting by experience, that best of teachers, a system of apprenticeship might be introduced, free from the objections which have been urged, and yet calculated to embrace all those advantages of a moral, social and religious nature, which I so earnestly alluded to, and which I contend were so anxiously provided for by our ancestors, and the wisdom of which the greater part of the kingdom, even up to this day, recognizes by its practice. If, upon this latter subject, I have gone beyond the cold rules of argument, impute it, I beseech you, to feelings which I could not restrain, I have but obeyed the impulses of the man and the Christian, in lifting up my

voice against the abrogation of a system to which the moral world owes so much. Regarding its abrogation, or which is the same thing, the repeal of its privileges, as a dissolution of those bands which have hitherto held the trading part of this trading country together, as breaking down those barriers which have been interposed to check and prevent early licentiousness, the sure result of early emancipation, and as tending to effect a revolution of the worst kind, in the character of a vast proportion of my countrymen; I will continue to protest against such a change before whatever tribunal I may be called to argue the question, I will at no moment forget that I am a citizen as well as an advocate, or fail to remind my judges that the proposed repeal of the laws of apprenticeship, while it sinks the immense body of men, for whom I appear, in utter despair, cannot confine its pernicious effects to the woollen manufacture, but must pervade the whole kingdom, and successively operate upon every other branch of trade.

You are seated here as judges upon this question—whatever may be the report you agree to, it cannot but have great, and, I trust, deserved weight—Should you in that report sug-

gest some medium measures, some such qualifications as may meet the interests, sooth the feelings, conciliate the affections, and even, as far as it is safe so to do, indulge the prejudices of the respective parties before you, it will have the best and happiest effect. But if, in the spirit of stern authority, a bill should be introduced expressly to gratify one of the parties, I believe it will have the most fatal tendency, and as such I solemnly deprecate it. I do not mean to intimate that my clients will want temper, their conduct has proved the contrary; it is now three or four years that they have been under what I may truly call my paternal guidance and direction, and I can boldly and conscientiously assert, that their conduct throughout has been most exemplary; I have personally the means of knowing, that from the introduction of the first bill of repeal, which happily was thrown out, they have taken no public step whatever but with the knowledge and advice of his Majesty's ministers, or of those noble and eminent persons who so graciously interposed on their behalf, who admitted them to audiences with the kindest condescension; who received them into their closets while higher born men waited in the anti-chamber; who lent the most patient ear to their representa-

tions, and reasoned with them upon their case with parental mildness. This conduct had the effect it ought to have, it has left an indelible impression of gratitude upon their minds, and I believe, there is not one of the noble and honourable persons I allude to, for whom these men would not lay down their lives. Sensibility is not confined to station, as was made apparent this very morning, by the effect of the resolution to which you condescended to come, it filled the petitioners with the highest respect for you, and in a moment banished, I hope for ever, all remembrance of the asperity with which they imagined themselves to have been treated in the early sittings of this committee. Be assured, Sir, that his Majesty has in no part of his dominions a hundred thousand of more loyal subjects than those concerned in the woollen manufacture; it remains with yourself and your honourable colleagues to render them the happiest, and make them the best!

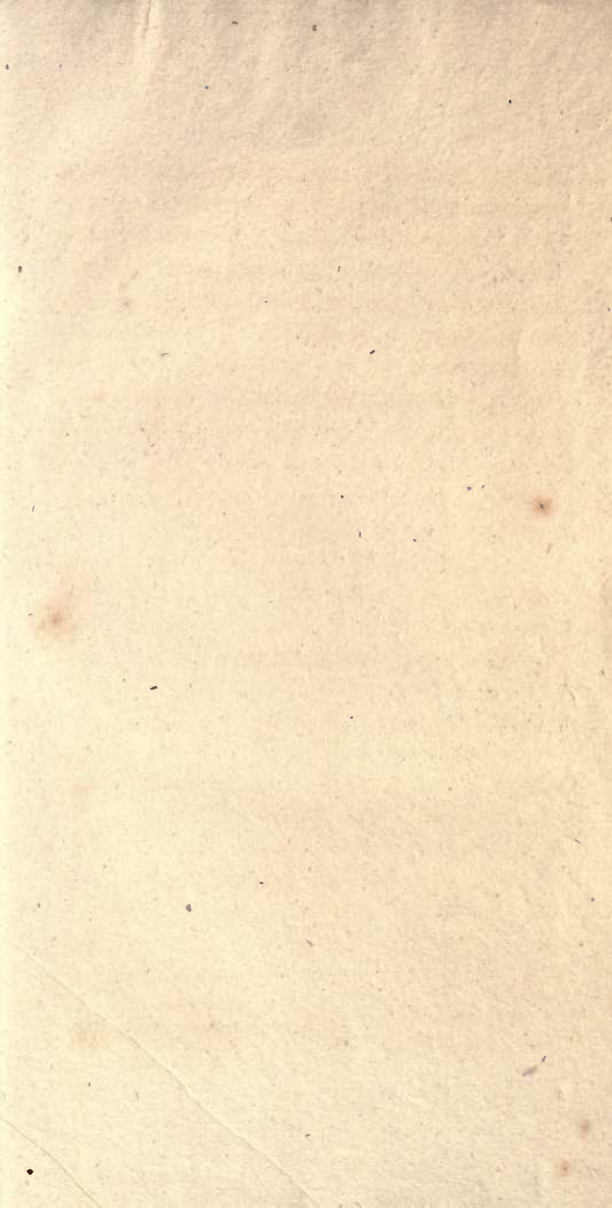
I am aware, Sir, that from an extreme anxiety to compress my address within the time allotted to this days sitting, I may have omitted many important points upon so extensive a subject, and that the same cause may have rendered my arrangement much less perspicuous than I could



have wished it to have been. It is my consolation that I address those whose long and laborious inquiries have made them masters of the subject, whose judgment therefore will supply my defects, and whose urbanity I know will excuse them. To this request, allow me, Sir, to add my grateful thanks to the committee for the attention with which they have been pleased to honour me.

THE END.

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to honor me. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,  
J. H. P. [Signature]











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